

# Mortuza murder Hartal paralyses normal life in north Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

A half-day hartal paralysed normal life in North Chittagong yesterday.

CU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Hathazari thana units of Jubo League and Awami League jointly enforced the hartal protesting the killing of Ali Mortuza, senior vice president of CU BCL unit.

Police arrested five BCL activists from different points during the hartal. They were identified as Shahadat Hossain, 22, Liton, 22, Abul Monsur, 19, Mohammad Iqbal and Omar Faruq.

Academic activities on the CU campus were also disrupted due to the hartal.

Road communication between Chittagong and Rangamati was disrupted as agitating BCL and Awami League activists put up barricade on the road.

BCL alleged that 10 of its activists were injured when police charged baton on them.

A protest rally was held at the

## 50 new double-decker buses in city soon

UNB, Dhaka

Fifty new double-decker buses will ply in different routes of the capital from later this month.

The buses are now being assembled at BRTC's Joydevpur workshop under a Tk 60.26 crore soft credit from Sweden.

Each of the 160-seater buses will cost Tk 1.20 crore.

The latest model double-deckers will increase transport facilities for the common people, said an official handout.

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda yesterday visited the BRTC workshop to see the assembling of Volvo brand buses.

Fazlul Haq Nilam MP, Communications Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat and BRTC Chairman Taimur Alam Khandaker were present on the occasion.

## Ex-ward commissioner

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He was rushed to nearby Holy Family Hospital and then to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

The autopsy of the body was done at DMCH morgue at about 3 am yesterday, hospital sources said.

Family sources told this correspondent yesterday that another armed attack was made on Khaled only three days ago.

The namaj-e-janaja of the deceased was held at the Maghbazar Rail Crossing Mosque after Asar prayer yesterday. Among others, Home Minister Atif Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Home Lutfur Zaman Babar, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Shadok Hossain Khoka, Major Mannan MP attended the janja.

Khaled was commissioner of Ward No. 54 of Dhaka City Corporation for nine years during Ershad's rule.

He joined BNP in 1991.

He was the owner of Khaled Poultry at Savar and ran an orphanage there. Earlier he was a contractor by profession.

He was a relative of President Badruddoza Chowdhury, family sources said.

## Blair may request

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safeguard distribution of relief materials.

In case factional fights break up, which is seen as an unlikely scenario now, foreign troops involved in the security force will, if required, have to resort to force to stop such violence, the sources said.

Bangladesh happens to be on top of the list of UN peacekeeping missions. If it decides to join the security force in Afghanistan, its help in de-mining and in medical and engineering fields may be specially sought.

The sources said Bangladesh may decide to make a positive response as it has always identified itself closely with the hopes and aspirations of Afghan people.

Besides, it will also give Bangladesh an opportunity to participate in the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, they said.

Jordan, Indonesia and Turkey, among others, are learnt to be willing to contribute troops.

Bangladesh and British officials here were highly tight-lipped about Tony Blair's itinerary and objective of the visit.

The British High Commission even declined to confirm the programme till late yesterday afternoon saying "we know nothing

## Odhikar report says 179 children tortured to death, 622 women raped across the country in year 2001

BSS, Dhaka

Odhikar, a coalition of NGOs engaged in observing the human rights situation in Bangladesh, Tuesday said that some 179 children were killed out of 646 who were subjected to different forms of torture, and 622 women were raped in various parts of the country from January 1 to December 30, 2001.

An Odhikar report released here also said that 252 women became victims of acid attack and 163 women fell victims to dowry-related violence.

The report said two journalists were killed, 114 injured and 5 arrested last year.

## 44 JU teachers demand release of Shahriar Kabir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-four teachers of Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday demanded immediate release of Shahriar Kabir, a noted writer and columnist.

In a joint statement, they expressed deep concern over his arrest on sedition charge.

The teachers also demanded that the government take steps to stop repression on religious minorities and take action against those involved in such incidents.

## Armed terrorists attack policemen at Gaibandha: 8 injured

UNB, Gaibandha

Eight people including two sub-inspectors of police were injured in an attack by terrorists at Gaibandha on Monday night during a special drive of the Narcotic Control Department.

Police said they, accompanied by a magistrate, raided a shop at the local bus stand and arrested two people for selling phensidyl.

Soon after the arrest, a group of armed terrorists attacked policemen and snatched the arrested two. They abducted two sub-inspectors and beat them.

Additional police force rushed to the spot and rescued the sub-inspectors. The Sis were admitted to local hospital.

Police later arrested eight people from the bus stand area. Transport workers brought out a procession yesterday morning demanding their release.

Two cases, one for snatching the two criminals from police and another for selling narcotics, were filed with the local police station.

## Book Year

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national development.

Khaled reiterated her pledge to support all efforts for development of libraries in the country. "Due consideration will be given to setting up a library commission to assist in this regard," she said.

Pragmatic steps will be taken to formulate library law as recommended under the National Book Policy which was also instituted by the BNP government in 1994, the Prime Minister told the function.

Recalling her declaration on the new year's day in 1994 to observe January 1 as National Book Day and January 1-7 as Book Week, the Prime Minister said these were aimed at promoting reading habits among all.

During the function the Prime Minister gave away a "Library Organiser" award to Professor Mohammad Sharif for his contribution to the library movement in the country. The award carries a crest and a cheque for Tk 10,000.

At the same function the Prime Minister distributed textbooks marking timely printing and publishing of books for new year's schooling.

Education Minister Dr Faruk Osman, State Minister for Education Amanullah Aman and Ehsanul Haq Milon and Deputy Minister for Education Abdus Salam Pinto were present on the occasion.

Later, the prime minister went round a number of stalls at the fair marking the opening of the book bazaar. She purchased three books of her choice, including "Sata Monishir Katha" by Bhubesh Rai.

The organisers declared that the book fair would be free from polythene bags as part of the government ban on polythene shopping bags from yesterday.

## Transport fares

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under the circumstances there are no options left other than increasing the fare by next week.

Leaders of Bangladesh Truck Malik Samity (BTMS), however, said due to the fact that the government has not yet formulated any fare structure for trucks, truck owners have to increase the existing fare as the price of diesel has been increased by Tk 1.5 per litre.

Mahbub Chowdhury, organising secretary of BTMS, while talking with The Daily Star said, "Price hike of fuel will definitely increase the operation and maintenance costs of trucks resulting in an increased fare."

## SAARC for draft SAFTA treaty

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round of negotiations to step up the process, he said.

He said the committee decided to harmonise the stand of regional countries on a number of international issues like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) related matters, including on the recently held Doha round of WTO talks.

The committee also decided to coordinate on World Food Summit, sustainable development conference among others, he said.

It okayed, he said, on a proposal from Nepal, the validity of development or growth quadrangle in two or more countries.

AFP adds: Senior diplomats from South Asian countries unanimously have agreed to work towards passing national laws to control terrorism and drug trafficking in the region.

The agreement came at a meeting on Monday of the seven countries' foreign secretaries ahead of their leaders' summit, Nepalese diplomat Pushkar Rajbhandari said.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) formed in 1985 groups Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal,

Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Rajbhandari did not give details of the agreement on terrorism and drugs but the issue of terrorism has been at the heart of the current military tensions between nuclear capable India and Pakistan.

AP says: The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan will come face to face here for the first time since a tense standoff between the two neighbours.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar arrived from Islamabad Monday night while his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, was expected to arrive later yesterday.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan also arrived here yesterday. He later met his Pakistani counterpart Abdul Sattar.

Foreign ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation were scheduled to meet today and tomorrow. The leaders of the seven South Asian nations, including Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf, will meet this weekend.

There had been fears that the

summit -- postponed from November because of the pending war in Afghanistan -- might be delayed again by the warlike tension between India and Pakistan since the Dec 13 militant attack on the Parliament in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, the 11th SAARC Summit is all set to start here on Friday.

The summit conference will be taking place amid tight security here as Nepal has intensified, over the past six weeks since it clamped a countrywide emergency, to combat six-year old domestic insurgency posed by Maoist extremists.

In Kathmandu, movement is restricted between 9 pm and 5 am due to an undeclared curfew with frequent checks by military at police check posts at numerous city points.

Nepal remains busy giving touches to beautify Kathmandu which hosts the permanent SAARC Secretariat.

Flags of seven member countries already flutter along city streets as the city very much welcomes the regional dignitaries as the numerous banners and bunting declare.

## India, Pakistan renew nuclear

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ing Pakistan's latest crackdown on militant groups as a "step forward."

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee also held out the prospect of dialogue in a special message to Pakistan contained in a New Year's article that was quoted on the front pages of most Indian newspapers yesterday.

"Shed your anti-India mentality and take effective steps to stop cross-border terrorism, and you will find India willing to walk more than half the distance to work closely with Pakistan to resolve, through dialogue, any issue, including the contentious issue of Jammu and Kashmir," Vajpayee said.

Analysts, however, stressed that any normalisation of relations between the two South Asian nuclear rivals was still a long way off.

Pakistan said yesterday that India was still building up forces along their tense border and was prepared to deal with any threat from its giant neighbour.

"As far as Pakistan is concerned, India continues to build up its capability," government spokesman Major General Rashid Qureshi told a news briefing in the capital,

Islamabad.

"They have fully activated their forward air bases ... there is also information about naval movement. Their intentions are something that nobody would know," he said.

"Pakistan continues to very, very closely monitor each movement that the Indian armed forces make and continues to take appropriate defensive measures so that Pakistan is not surprised and is not caught unawares."

Meanwhile, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf is to leave for Beijing again on Thursday for talks with Chinese leaders on border tensions with India, a foreign ministry official said yesterday.

"President Musharraf will hold talks with Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji on Thursday. He will also attend a banquet being hosted by the Chinese premier for him at the Great Hall," the official said on condition of anonymity.

After an overnight stay in China he will fly to Kathmandu on Friday morning to attend a summit of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Musharraf's talks with Chinese leaders will focus on bilateral rela-

tions as well as on tension between Pakistan and India following the bloody December 13 attack on the Indian parliament, the official said.

He wound up a four-day trip to China only on December 24.

AP from Karachi adds: Relaxing a ban on Pakistan International Airlines flights over Indian airspace, Indian authorities allowed planes to fly Pakistanis out of New Delhi and the southern port city of Mumbai, a PIA spokesman said yesterday.

The airline asked India for permission to operate two special flights because dozens of Pakistanis weren't able to get out of India by Dec. 31 -- the deadline for cutting air, road and railroad links with Pakistan, said the airlines official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Mumbai flight, headed for Karachi, and the New Delhi jet, bound for Lahore, were scheduled to leave yesterday.

India banned Pakistan's national airline from entering Indian airspace beginning Jan 1 and ordered half of Pakistan's embassy staff out of the country.

Pakistan responded in kind.

## Users welcome ban on polybags

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Traders at different kitchen markets and department stores said they bought jute and other shopping bags for their customers. "I had some polybags in my stock, but some policemen while patrolling the market came to my shop and took them away. Now I'm selling jute bags," said a grocer at a market at Mirpur.

Sellers in many cases offered low-cost jute bags with the sold-out goods to regular customers for free.

"On the very first day, we are giving our regular clients jute bags free of cost," said a trader at a department store at Banani.

Sarwar Hossain, a government employee, was asked yesterday by a vegetable trader at the Karwanbazar kitchen market to buy ajute bag.

"I know the government banned use of polybags in the city from today in order to minimise environmental hazards. But I did not expect this sort of spontaneous response from the commoners," Sarwar told The Daily Star.

The city dwellers started dumping wastes into jute bags, too.

Different units of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) have

been working round the clock to produce jute bags of different shapes and sizes so that people can use them for shopping.

The BJMC has started delivering jute bags by trucks to city markets including Karwan Bazar, Kachukhet, Fakirerpool, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Thathari Bazar, Jatrabari, Amin Bazar and Mirpur.

Small jute bags were selling at Tk 5 and large ones at Tk 12 to Tk 15 in different city markets yesterday. Besides, another type of bag made from cement packaging materials was also available in the markets.

"It is possible to produce small, low-cost jute bags and reduce the price to Tk 1.50. If the government can properly enforce its decision, the private sector will also come forward to producing not only low-cost bags but also various fancy jute bags," said an expert of Bangladesh Jute Research Institute, preferring anonymity.

UNB adds: Forest and Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj yesterday visited city markets to see the public response to the enforcement of the ban.

He talked to shopkeepers, salesmen and buyers at

Shantinagar, Mouchak, Karwan Bazar, Mohammadpur and New Market kitchen markets and found that they were all for jute bags. He thanked them for responding positively to the government step.

Meanwhile, Jute Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed yesterday formally distributed jute bags manufactured by the BJMC, among a group of selling agencies as a substitute to banned polybags.

The organisations, including BRAC, Bikash Organisation and Kamal and Bros Limited, received the jute bags from BJMC Sales Centre.

## Shahriar

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prosecutor said.

After hearing both sides, the court fixed the date to deliver the order on bail petition.

Barrister M Amirul Islam, Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, S S Halder, Ozayer Farooq and more than 200 lawyers appeared for the accused.

Shahriar Kabir was detained by Special Branch of police at the Immigration Desk at ZIA on his return from Kolkata on November 22 last year.

Later, he was shown arrested.

## AL: Council meeting

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in some vital secretarial posts including the post of general secretary. Senior party leaders however want Sheikh Hasina to retain her presidency, party insiders hinted.

They said an extended meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee would be convened shortly after Sheikh Hasina returns home from USA, most likely on January 9. Presidents, secretaries and convenors of the its 72 district level

organisational committees are likely to attend the meeting.

After the central council meeting, district unit council meetings would follow as soon as possible after formation of village and ward committees, union committees and Upazila committees at the grass-roots level, said the party secretary.

After its last biannual council meeting held in 1998, a special council of the AL had extended the tenure of the existing central committee for two years in June 2000 while the party was still in power.

It is expected, a senior leader said, that the AL chief would direct district level leaders to intensify its membership collection drive and prepare for a greater movement against the present government after the central council meeting.

An organisational countryside tour might also take place, anticipated the leader who preferred not to be named.

## Ministers

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Most activists came to lobby for their friends, relatives or people of their locality involving various matters including transfers, postings, recommendations for jobs, admission in schools and projects.

They said a good number of lobbyists won recommendations from ministers for their wards' admission to good schools in the city.

Many requested ministers to make phone calls to persons concerned to ensure results. In some cases, ministers rejected their requests because those were way out of line, and advised them to meet with proper ministers instead.

A senior minister, on condition of anonymity said most BNP leaders and activists were lobbying in favour of Awami League men in exchange for money.

A large number of party leaders and activists from different parts of the country converged at the party central office and waited in long queues to meet ministers.

Similar situation had also been witnessed in the last few days at the Bangladesh Secretariat where lobbying by party activists, sources said, would be discontinued now that party offices have been designated for that purpose.

Party leaders expect that the new step would definitely cut the crowd at Bangladesh Secretariat enabling ministers to discharge their responsibilities smoothly.

"We hope the massive rush of party workers at the Secretariat coming from all over the country will reduce substantially. We will not entertain activists at the Secretariat anymore," said a senior minister.

## President's son

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election campaign in Munshiganj."

Replying to a question, Mahi said he saw an auto-rickshaw parked on the spot and probably it was thrown from the vehicle.

"It might be a planned attack as the attackers might know the time of regular meet with my father."

The pungent smoke also spread in front of Bangabhaban gate, he said.

Mahi said a diary would be filed in this connection and police were asked to examine the spot to identify the nature of the explosives.

## Police crackdown

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Commuters coming to the city from the outskirts also suffered a lot due to scarcity of vehicles, sources said. Many of them could not come for work yesterday, they added.

Meanwhile a large number of owners and drivers of the seized vehicles and leaders of bus and truck owners associations were seen crowding the DC Traffic's office, trying to release their vehicles.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) last month banned plying of old vehicles in the city to reduce traffic jam and air pollution. It also warned of stern action against violators.

Since the issuance of the ban order, different bus and truck owners' associations have been demanding withdrawal of the decision, terming it "illogical and unlawful". But the government remained firm on its decision.

Meanwhile, the Staff Pariban Association (SPS), under which some 500 buses ply in the city to carry government officials and employees, has threatened to go for an indefinite strike if the decision is not withdrawn.

"If the decision is not withdrawn, 80 per cent of the staff buses will go off the roads causing a serious problem," said its president.

The Bangladesh Truck Owners' Association also warned of action if

the decision is not withdrawn. It will sit for a meeting today to take a decision, sources in the association said.

## Journalists

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others, accompanied the delegation.

Referring to the upcoming visit of a high-powered delegation led by Chinese prime minister to Bangladesh this month, the Chinese ambassador said that Bangladesh would be the first country to be visited by the Chinese prime minister in the new year.

The ambassador hoped that The Daily Star would work towards uplifting economic condition in Bangladesh and strengthening the friendly relation between the two countries as well.

Following a proposal by Syed Fahim Munaim, Chui Yun Xi expressed his interest in cooperation between the two newspapers.

The visit by the delegation of People's Daily to Bangladesh followed an invitation by BCPFA. The delegation arrived in the city on Sunday last and is scheduled to leave tomorrow (Thursday).

Launched in 1948, People's Daily is one of China's leading newspapers with a total of 2,200 in the country. People's Daily publishes 22 affiliated newspapers and magazines as well.

## Pak cricketers

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appearance in a triangular tournament in Sharjah in October and November. They had to wait for an international engagement after New Zealand called off their Pakistan tour due to security reasons arising out of America-led attack on Afghanistan in November.

While Pakistan will be hungry to go into the field, Bangladesh will get little time to lick their wounds from their disastrous campaign in New Zealand.

The national team flew back home last night after two crushing defeats in Hamilton and Wellington.

Pakistan will start the 27-day tour with a three-day match against the Bangladesh A team at the BKSP on January 9.

The first Test will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from January 9-13. The second Test will be played at Chittagong from January 16. They will also play the first one-dayer at the port city on January 22.

The visitors will return to Dhaka to play the next two one-day internationals at the Bangabandhu National Stadium under floodlights on January 24 and 25.

Pakistan will field two different teams for Test and limited-overs games. Faisal Iqbal, Mohammad Sami and leg-spinner Danish Kaneria will be arriving in Dhaka specifically for the Tests and leave for Pakistan after the second match in Chittagong.

Shahid Afridi, Azhar Mahmud and Shoaib Malik will replace the trio for the one-day series.

Young left-hand batsman Imran Farhat has been included in the tour party after star opener Sayeed Anwar pulled out due to injury.

Pakistan will fly in the capital at around 9.15 am.

SQUAD

Waqar Younis (captain), Inzamam-ul-Haq (vice captain), Taufeeq Umar, Faisal Iqbal, Yousof Ali Khan, Naved Latif, Younis Khan, Rashid Latif, Saql